CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of managing network elements in a network, comprising:

providing a network element independent module that includes functions for managing different types of network elements; and

providing a network element dependent module that includes functions for managing a specific type of network element; and

providing a network management application that calls the functions of the network element independent and dependent modules to manage a plurality of network elements in a network.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the functions of the network element dependent module are executable at run time through dynamic class loading.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the network element dependent module includes specifications of the network element.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the specifications include a graphical representation of the network element.

5. A system for managing network elements in a network, comprising:

a network element independent module that includes functions for managing different types of network elements;

a network element dependent module that includes functions for managing a specific type of network element; and

a network management application that calls the functions of the network element independent and dependent modules to manage a plurality of network elements in a network.

6.   The system of claim 5, wherein the functions of the network element dependent module are executable at run time through dynamic class loading.

5   7.   The system of claim 5, wherein the network element dependent module includes specifications of the network element.

8.   The system of claim 7, wherein the specifications include a graphical representation of the network element.

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9.   A method of managing network elements in a network, comprising:

sending a request to a network element for a network element dependent module that includes functions for managing the specific type of the network element;

executing the network element dependent module to create an interface to the network

15   element; and

utilizing the interface to manage the network element.

10.   The method of claim 9, further comprising sending a request to the network element for the specific type of the network element.

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11.   The method of claim 9, further comprising sending a request to the network element for the software version of the network element.

12.   The method of claim 9, further comprising:

25   sending a request to the network element for the specific type of the network element;

sending a request to the network element for the software version of the network

element; and

utilizing a stored network element dependent module if the specific type and software version of the network element are the same.

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13.   The method of claim 9, further comprising receiving an object change message that there is a new network element on the network.

14.   A system for managing network elements in a network, comprising:

5   a means for sending a request to a network element for a network element dependent module that includes functions for managing the specific type of the network element;

a means for executing the network element dependent module to create an interface to the network element; and

a means for utilizing the interface to manage the network element.

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15.   The system of claim 14, further comprising sending a request to the network element for the specific type of the network element.

16.   The system of claim 14, further comprising sending a request to the network

15   element for the software version of the network element.

17.   The system of claim 14, further comprising:

sending a request to the network element for the specific type of the network element;

sending a request to the network element for the software version of the network

20   element; and

utilizing a stored network element dependent module if the specific type and software version of the network element are the same.

18.   The system of claim 14, further comprising receiving an object change

25   message that there is a new network element on the network.